

POLITICAL SCIENCES



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# **Monisms and Pluralisms in the History of Political and Social Models**

edizioni epoké

ISBN 978-88-99647-80-3

©2016 Edizioni Epoké

First edition: 2016

Edizioni Epoké. Via N. Bixio, 5

15067, Novi Ligure (AL)

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Graphic project and layout: Simone Tedeschi, Edoardo Traverso

Cover picture: «Tramonto a Novi», acrylic on wood by Beppe Levrero (1966)  
in *Beppe Levrero*, Edizioni Epoké (2016), Novi Ligure.

I edition

Printed in February 2018

Pressup srl, Rome

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## Chapter Ten

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# A NEW FORM OF DEMOCRACY: ALDO CAPITINI'S OPEN SOCIETY AND "OMNICRACY" *Nicoletta Stradaioli*

Aldo Capitini (1899-1968) was an atypical intellectual in the Italian cultural and political panorama of his time: pacifist and convinced activist (his was the idea for the peace march from Perugia to Assisi), he perceived, long before others, the need to reconsider democracy in order to transform it with a new form of political and social organization. Challenging the society of his time and criticizing its inadequacies and its ills, the Umbrian intellectual theorized and put into practice new forms of citizenship with the aim of arriving at a different way of administering power. The transformation he had in mind would modify not only power relationships, but also the methods of managing power – including institutional power, even when representative. This was necessary in order to achieve a broad-based and capillary political space able to reconcile the single and the community: an open society, in flux, «in which [there would be] freedom, attention to each citizen, space for his growth and development, and which [would embrace], at least as a principle, all mankind» (Capitini 1950: 108, 267)<sup>1</sup>.

Capitini's thesis concerning the issue of democracy is developed around the idea of 'openness'. Such a thesis is achieved politically through a society that includes everyone, in a new society and social organization focused on all citizens and all people, in which they participate actively in civic life. This political model is opposed to a 'closed society' which the philosopher recognizes in the institutional structures of his time, whether political, economical

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of cited texts from Capitini works is by the author.

or ecclesiastical: in such structures the individual is constrained, becoming indifferent and selfish toward one's neighbors.

The debate on open society and its theoretical forms has been interest to a large number of authors, such as Henri Bergson and Karl Popper, to name a few, among whom Capitini not only occupies an important place but is also one of the first to have furnished a fully-rounded concept of the characteristics such society should possess<sup>2</sup>. The idea of openness propounded by the Perugian intellectual intended to modify the relationship between State and citizen, between State and society, and – critical of the 'closed' logic of the State-individual dichotomy – set forth an original concept of pluralism to be achieved in the harmonious integration between governing bodies-individual-society-economic structures, that is, between the public and private aspects of life<sup>3</sup>. Having said that, I have no intention to scrutinize the complexity of Capitini's entire thought, but rather to reflect on some traits of his political project, focusing on forms of development of a plural and collective edification of the State and of politics<sup>4</sup>. In this context, this paper represents a first step in a study currently underway.

Throughout his life, Capitini was constantly engaged in the project to renew democratic society. It was a path that can be broken down chronologically into four phases:

1. the period of training at Pisa's Scuola Normale Superiore: the 1930s and the early 1940s witness the founding of Capitini's political theory, marked by antifascism and his liberalsocialist experience;
2. the period after World War II, during which the political paradigm is refined, culminating in the first experiences of grass-roots democracy;
3. the 1950s represent an important turning point: if nationally the struggle between fascism and antifascism appears to have been overcome, on the international level the Cold War looms ahead. This new historical-political context causes Capitini to further develop his political theory, which now concentrates on the theme of 'open revolution' and 'nonviolent revolution';
4. the 1960s, finally, are particularly intense and creative: the Umbrian philosopher's thought turns to the transformation of political and social life through forms of democracy which are decentralized and direct.

<sup>2</sup> See Capitini (1950: 108-112, 264-265, 267), Bergson (1959), Popper (1977). Moreover, see De Sanctis (1993: 230-231).

<sup>3</sup> Here we can note, with some differences, how close Capitini's position is to that of Gobetti, for whom the State not only should take individuals into its sphere of action but also has the obligation actively to promote citizen participation through civic education. See: Gobetti (1960); Gobetti (2008); Capitini (1968); Polito (1994: 179-183).

<sup>4</sup> With regard to Capitini's political writings see: Capitini (2016).

This progression highlights the evolution of Capitini's political design, i.e.: a) the historical, theoretical and political components underlying certain choices made by the Perugian thinker; b) the experimentation with new models of participation.

1. The context in which Capitini lived was fraught with anguish and tragedy: they were years of harsh ideological clashes and preparation for war, in which irreconcilable positions opposed each other and so invariably demanded that every citizen take a stand. Capitini's political reform had its beginning, in fact, in a concrete opposition to the totalitarian monism of the Fascist dictatorship – an opposition which, according to Capitini, had to begin with the individual, with his «intimate self», in order to be a concrete struggle against every form of intolerance and exclusion. For young people to overcome their attachment to fascism and to Mussolini, they had to experience an inner 'conversion', a 'fervor' of a different kind, which the intellectual identified as an appeal to the inner self, which is also a religious appeal (De Sanctis 1993: 230-233). The religion alluded to by the Umbrian philosopher, however, has absolutely no theistic references, much less metaphysical ones, but refers to man (Parodi 2012: 416-417): human beings must be at the center of a political change regarding the development of the human person, his qualities, his freedom. Man, in fact, is the «moral center of decision, responsibility and freedom» (Capitini 1942: 35).

In Capitini's vision, the search for a new form of social and political life as an alternative to Fascist monism was therefore, first of all, a religious openness which would translate into a firm commitment in the political field. Keeping in mind that religious openness and political openness are inextricably linked, and concentrating on the political logic of Capitini's open society, we see that the individual and political transformation which the philosopher wished to effect was, in the first instance, to take a position against the Fascist dictatorship, against the authoritarian collectivism on the Soviet model, and against capitalism<sup>5</sup>. These are three facets of the same trait: fascism, Soviet collectivism and capitalism all level human life, they all deprive it of any 'interior growth', they all are obstacles to freedom which annul the human person. If in fascism Capitini could not accept the nationalism, the colonial imperialism, the absolutist bureaucratic centralization, the police power, the exaltation of violence, the conservatism, the corporate State and the egoistic omnipotence of man, in Soviet collectivism he rejected the centralized control of the economy which translated into a bureaucratic plethora (Capitini 1960: 36-37): a

<sup>5</sup> Capitini's political-democratic idea was nurtured by his idea of ethical-religious reform. This paper cannot examine the religious aspects which greatly affected Capitini's change of perspective on the political world.

totalitarian solution which no longer distinguished between public and private, between political and economic. In Capitini's view, however, capitalist organization of society was scarcely different, reducing human beings to merchandise, to instruments in the hands of those in possession of capital, to be exploited according to the needs of industry.

The distancing of the philosopher from such totalitarian visions – that is from systems in which the unrestricted development of human conscience and its free affirmation is forbidden – found its expression in a specific political alternative which took the name of *liberalsocialism* (Capitini 1990: 104-109). The characteristics of liberalsocialism were defined by its very opposition to monocratic fascism or totalitarianism: «a decentralized socialism with a democratic structure» which is «conscious of the limits of politics», which does not make «the majority coincide with the totality», which does not impose «the dominance of a sole party, a sole idea, a sole interpretation of it and a sole leader»; which opposes the «arms race» and the «theory that the end justifies the means» (Capitini 1950: 102; Polito 1994: 175). Capitini, working together with Guido Calogero, developed the bases for the liberalsocialist experiment<sup>6</sup>; in this paper it is not possible to examine in depth either the two thinkers' political project nor their different theoretical positions, but it does attempt to highlight how Capitini's idea for joining liberalism and socialism was the defining element in his political perspective, and with it the contrast between a monistic closure and a pluralistic openness of reality.

For Capitini, liberalsocialism is essentially a method of political renewal that should result in a truly democratic condition of society. In this sense, Capitini's liberalsocialist political engagement is a reinterpretation of the doctrinaire traditions of liberalism and socialism, to move beyond «liberalistic liberalism» and «statistic socialism» on the one hand, and «the revolution of rights» and the «collectivistic revolution» on the other (Polito 1994: 172-175; Capitini 1950: 11, 91-92). The Umbrian philosopher does not develop a unified ideological-doctrinaire perspective halfway between liberalism and socialism, but instead believes that a synthesis is possible between liberal principles (private sphere) and socialist principles (public sphere), aiming to go beyond both in order to found a society in which one class does not exploit the other and which guarantees, within the limits of economic means, all political and private freedoms of the individual. The concept is a harmonious (open) soci-

<sup>6</sup> Between 1936 and 1937, Capitini created, with Calogero, the liberalsocialist movement; in 1940 they issued *Il Manifesto del liberalsocialismo*, which enjoyed a wide underground circulation. Before long, however, the differences between the two founders of liberalsocialism emerged: Calogero's legalistic approach and Capitini's ethical-religious/social-religious one. Concerning liberalsocialism in general and specifically as conceived by Capitini and Calogero, see: Calogero (1945); Capitini (1950: 73-90); Capitini (1966); Bagnoli (1997); Nacci (2010); Capitini-Calogero (2009); De Sanctis (2005).

ety, opposed both to abstract individualism and abstract socialism, which can define the rights of the individual in terms of common good and those of the community in terms of individual well-being (Bobbio 1994: 51). The goal is to reconcile the greatest individual freedom with the greatest social solidarity. On the political plane that means reconsidering the relationship between freedom and authority, between freedom and social justice, in order to broaden individual and collective freedom. It is a matter of achieving a «social freedom» which can resist self-interest, individualism, egoism and collectivism and instead promote social cohesion, solidarity, altruism, equality and reciprocal understanding (Capitini 1990: 122-123). Thus conceived, freedom becomes an ethical-existential choice which results in forms of socialization and political participation inclined to change the democratic order of society<sup>7</sup>.

2. After World War II, Capitini put his liberalsocialist principles into practice, with experiences of shared involvement in democratic processes to grant people a larger role as citizens. But for Capitini the liberalsocialist project, in order to maintain its peculiar connotations (i.e. not to lose its 'openness' and its role as critic of the *status quo*), could not take the form of party organization. The liberalsocialism he had in mind was an ethical-religious movement aimed at a profound renewal, both social and moral. The party, therefore, with its «exclusive program», with its extreme tactics, with its bare formulas could not be the natural locus for expression of social transformation aiming to subvert «every rigidity and conservatism» (Capitini 1950: 94, 92, 19)<sup>8</sup>. It represented a concept of power to be overcome: true participation of citizens in discussion and decisions regarding common problems – that is in political life – did not necessarily have to take place through the mediation of organized groups. Capitini, therefore, countered the party with his idea of the «movement» and within the movement he favored the «center» (a space for discussion) which would «not align itself with other parties but keep itself open to all initiatives, not impose dogmas but discuss problems, not recognize membership privileges nor the power of *politicos*» (Bobbio 1969: 14).

The first concrete application of this political formula took place in July 1944, in a Perugia recently liberated from fascism (20 June 1944): Capitini created the first CSO – Center for Social Orientation – as a place for open public discussion. For the first time since the 1920s it was possible to exercise

<sup>7</sup> Freedom is a fundamental principle in Capitini's liberalsocialist political theory. Close behind is nonviolence, another element distinguishing Capitini's position from Calogero's.

<sup>8</sup> In 1943, the liberalsocialist movement merged with the Action Party (Partito d'Azione), for its part formed by a merger among «Giustizia e Libertà», republican groups and other similar democratic movements. Capitini opposed the transformation of the movement into a party, and promptly expressed his dissent in the first national convention, held in Florence in September 1943.

the right of assembly and take part in democratic and grass-roots activities<sup>9</sup>. «The Centers are free assemblies where all can take part and speak [...] about administrative matters both local and national, as well as social, political, ideological, cultural, technical and religious matters» (Capitini 1950: 238). Inspired by the participation of political and administrative authorities as well as by intellectuals, the Centers for Social Orientation aimed to arouse interest in a constructive debate on local and national problems and international events. Although they had no power to deliberate, «they consider the issues, they propose solutions [...] requirements and needs are dealt with as they arise» – with the result that there was no lack of suggestions for specific measures to be adopted (Capitini 1950: 239). Moreover, examining administrative problems and observing the technical side of local and national governing bodies, the Centers also filled a role of democratic supervision to promote transparency in the practice of power itself. Everyone, therefore, could take part in these meetings (in which women also participated in large numbers) which tried to give a political orientation and education to the Italian people (Capitini 1950: 239-241). Here Capitini was – as defined by Calogero – a «political educator» who ascribed importance to training the whole individual (Calogero 1945: 112-122). Harking back to the spirit of Giuseppe Mazzini, the CSOs educated Italians to be a «live, authentic, pure populace» on the one hand, and, on the other, to form a «democratic solidarity», a «collective spirit» (Capitini 1950: 240). In the immediate post-war era following the Fascist dictatorship, Italians, in Capitini's view, needed to be informed and educated to «discover community» (Capitini 1950: 245). The CSO was therefore «a school to oversee and develop democracy» and to carry out «open research» to promote 'democratic literacy' in citizens (Capitini 1950: 252, 241). The issues dealt with by the CSO were administrative, cultural, political and social; «not only was there a course in English [...], a long course on political economy, and a course on the history of social doctrines, but also [...] conversations and discussions [...] on the spiritual situation in America, on the *kollehoz*, on historical materialism, on Albania and the Balkans, on freedom, on the cultural problems of young people, on joy in work [...], on decentralized socialism, on the Italian agrarian problem, on the way to vote, etc.». Such courses also examined «the programs of the Italian political parties [...]». The purpose was not only to expound on

<sup>9</sup> In the city of Perugia, this first CSO was followed by eight more neighborhood Centers for Social Orientation. Moreover, early in the 1950s, the CSOs were flanked by a number of CROs – Centers for Religious Orientation. For Capitini the CROs represented a sort of new church, open to all and never exclusionist, which attracted students, workers, office employees, and disciples not only from Perugia. The CROs carried on a program of free discussions and reflections on religious themes, in the perspective of personal and social renewal that could take place outside and beyond mainstream religious institutions. See: Foppa Pedretti (2005: 74-75) and Capitini (1992: 10).



the single programs, but to examine the forces, the interests and the mentality behind those programs (Capitini 1950: 250-251). The Centers represented an early instrument of renewal in preparation for open and direct democracy; this was to be carried out by engaging the masses, educating them through the practice of a «collective way of thinking» – which did not, however, eliminate differences and contrasts. In Capitini's view, it was precisely the plurality of opinions that was central, to be followed by a process of comparing difficult choices: this pluralistic basis was essential to grow practically and achieve self-government and a new democracy (Capitini 1950: 260).

In order to reform (and renew) politics, the CSO also represented a first attempt at self-government of citizens: encouraging participation and political growth, it was the cornerstone for creating decentralized systems that would give value to local assemblies, associations, and civic organizations. In the campaign for administrative elections of 1946, the CSO in Perugia in fact proposed:

*That the new city administration give a stable and organic force to these assemblies. In addition to the City Council, with powers of deliberation, a number of CSOs should be created corresponding to each neighborhood and each outlying hamlet, for periodic meetings, [...] in which administrative problems of each area can be examined, proposals and criticisms can be made, in the presence of a city councilor charged with referring back to the City Council. The city administration for its part could entrust the regional and local CSOs with examining measures and giving their opinion, as well as carrying out duties such as local supervision, public order, price control, nomination of personnel, creation of circulating libraries with books and newspapers. [...] The management of each CSO (with a secretary to transmit the minutes to the Municipal secretary) could be elected by the citizens every six months. [...] This initiative would create the new extended Municipality. Whereas the municipality of the 1920s did not grant a voice to many classes of citizens or to women, this municipality as conceived in Perugia [...], will be a municipality in which all inhabitants take part and are present, to overcome the excessive separation between those who administer and those who are administered, between civil servants and the public, between the city and the countryside (Capitini 1950: 244-245).*

The innovative element which Capitini wished to highlight was a decentralized system through which the individual could be an active member of his immediate surroundings. Intermediate groups would help temper the vertical structure of power. The dual dimension of State-individual was refuted, both in its collectivist version, in which the State is «all» and the individual «null», and in the liberal version, in which the individual is «maximum» and the State is «minimum». Through organs of self-government (both political and eco-

nomic) it would be possible to affect politics from within and below, resulting in its continual transformation. Capitini expressed himself thus:

*The ideal is for everyone to participate in community life, each person bringing a full and continual contribution; it is therefore to be hoped, and to be studied, how agricultural concerns – for instance – and socialized industries may be based on the ‘advice’ of all individual participants; this will happen of necessity, according to the various competencies. Such self-government requires the participation of everyone, in the culture and dignity of their conscience (Capitini 1950: 78).*

The ultimate goal was to have the interests of the governed and the governing coincide, to have productive and regulative activities with a common aim, to result in a new collectivism that was democratic rather than authoritarian, capable of eliminating the class of inept politicians. (Capitini. 1950: 258-262.).

3. The result was that in this constant opening of the political dimension, Capitini rejected any institutional ‘closure’, that is, all the rigid structures blocking a free dissemination of power. This commitment to freshen and to break up fossilized institutions closed into themselves required constant revolutionary actions: «a total revolution, outspoken and open» to achieve «a society for all» (Capitini 1956: 5, 14). In the 1950s the content of Capitini’s political inquiry turned toward forms of political opposition which further enriched the body of his thought. The open revolution was also a method of «awakening» civil society, improving social political structures from the bottom up through nonviolent struggle. For the philosopher the central point was that the «total transformation of power and of the economy» had to be based specifically on nonviolent methods, since political revolutions of the past allowing «the destruction of adversaries, the Reign of Terror», had demonstrated the extent to which the new world they aspired to create was, in the end, similar to the old (Capitini 1956: 46, 14). Capitini’s revolution, aimed at changing social, economic, political (and moral) structures, began with association (the «center» in his terminology), with debate and verbal confrontation, and proceeded with a series of acts such as protest, noncollaboration, sacrifice<sup>10</sup>. It was a revolution in the sense that it was anti-authoritarian, anticapitalistic, and anti-bureaucratic, and it had as its objective a) a State «in the service of all citizens» in which

<sup>10</sup> In this period, Capitini made numerous references to Danilo Dolci’s nonviolent struggle. In the 1950s, Dolci (1924-1997), like Capitini an educator and an activist in the cause of nonviolence, carried out a number of actions aimed at highlighting social concerns and raising consciousness, as well as concrete gestures to help the weakest and most needy. See the exchange of correspondence between the two: Capitini-Dolci (2008) and Capitini (1958). For a bio-bibliography on Dolci see: Spagnoletti (1975); Barone (2004).

power would be «decentralized and monitored in the citizens' meetings, under their control»; and b) an economy «at the service of all citizens» leading to an economic order in which property was collective (Capitini 1956: 46-48)<sup>11</sup>.

4. Nonetheless, the 'revolutionary' Capitini did not wish to bring down the existing democratic system, but rather try to reinforce it by spreading forms of self-government while fine-tuning the mechanism of participation. In the 1960s this project was carried out with the idea of «omnicracy», or power to all<sup>12</sup>. It was necessary to affirm a) a freedom that could be reconciled with socialization and b) an application of freedom resulting in both individual well-being and common good. That involved a political and social unity able to withstand any thrust toward self-interest, and – as Capitini repeated:

*a vast network of grass-roots organizations, local advisory bodies, family-school committees, social centers [...], internal commissions, school councils and university committees, training centers for nonviolent activism, local commissions to oversee all forms of assistance and benefits, and development of assemblies to train all citizens, especially young people so they do not feel isolated or manipulated from above (Capitini 1969: 82).*

The political order was to be built «from the bottom up»; on the one hand that meant a broadening of popular participation in political and social issues and in the decision-making process; on the other hand it involved «power to all». The latter was effected in the assembly and in the strengthening of public opinion, defending the rights of free expression, information and control.

Omnocratic power was therefore founded on assembly and on public opinion as bases for a direct democracy not to be understood as «permanent administration by the anonymous public mass which tramples [...] on the rights of minorities», but as the multiplication of permanent assemblies and the spreading of self-government at the local level (Capitini 1969: 83, 95, 99). In this way the parliamentary system could be integrated and to all effects improved; the assemblies dealt with certain problems, studying them and proposing solutions; while the local government made possible administration and supervision of the organs of power on the part of the citizens, thanks also to direct experience with the problems and the persons involved.

From this point of view, the epistolary exchange between Capitini and Norberto Bobbio is especially significant, since what emerges is a difference in viewpoint concerning the real possibility for direct democracy (or power of all

<sup>11</sup> The idea of open and nonviolent revolution calls to mind the great theme of pacifism which occupies such a large part of Capitini's thought.

<sup>12</sup> For a detail analysis of Capitini's concept of «omnicracy» see: Polito (1998: 125-143).

citizens) to correct the flaws of the parliamentary representative system. For Bobbio, direct democracy must not be confused with the mere broadening of public participation in decision-making, because «if this broadening occurs only through a multiplication of the elective organs, the democracy remains representative – perhaps more representative, but not, simply for that reason, a direct democracy» (Capitini-Bobbio 2012: 119). Referring to Capitini's ideas, Bobbio admitted that «[his] position is different, and far more consistent» (Capitini-Bobbio 2012: 119). According to Bobbio, the Perugian intellectual was in fact speaking of «direct democracy in the sense of power to all through discussions and decision-making by small groups», but this system, however laudable, would present major problems in practice, since it was applicable in small cities like Perugia but impossible to carry out «in industrial cities like Turin» (Capitini-Bobbio 2012: 119). Moreover, «without a certain amount of indoctrination or propaganda or, worse yet, manipulation, it is not possible to reach solutions [...] reflecting at least the majority».

Bobbio emphasized the importance of pedagogical instruments such as debate and discussion at grass-roots level, but «the purpose of this discussion and education should be to understand general problems», whereas he feared that it would «encourage the tendency of each person to place his own particular interests at the forefront». For the philosopher of law, «the danger of direct democracy is particular interests, fragmentation to an extreme degree»: with the exception of choices which have no middle ground, such as the choice between war and peace, it was impossible to reach an effective political synthesis (Capitini-Bobbio: 2012: 119-120).

How did Capitini answer? He understood his friend's reservations; he well knew that an assembly could run aground on inconclusive shoals and be the instrument for an ideological violence lacking even basic rules to guarantee full democratic functioning. Nonetheless, in order to change a system that was closed, hierarchical and technocratic it was necessary to proceed by degrees, «creatively, making additions little by little», because «parliamentary democracy as the sole instrument is not acceptable» (Capitini-Bobbio 2012: 121). Of course State administration was a complex matter requiring technical knowledge and decisions, but Capitini's overall concept was «not only to overcome and exercise State power», but to have «instruments outside the State», grass-roots instruments of society to give a voice to citizens' political weight. He wrote:

*the point at which I was a follower of Rousseau long before reading him was the distinction between the sovereign, which for me is everyone, and the executors who are unable to make independent decisions and are at times simply temporary (Capitini-Bobbio 2012: 122)<sup>13</sup>.*

<sup>13</sup> Rousseau appears to be one of Capitini's great 'teachers'. The Perugian philosopher is at-

The distinction between sovereign power and executive power did not satisfy Bobbio:

*I realize the good reasons of those who speak, as you do, of the need for power to all, but at the same time I realize that a power is all the more rational when it is based on clear knowledge of the problems to resolve. A power is not rational simply because it is held by everyone. It is not rational even presuming that all those who hold it are reasonable. It is not enough to be reasonable; it is necessary also to know how things actually are, in order not to ask for impossible and contradictory solutions. Rousseau had not yet become aware of industrial society. The first person to do so, Saint-Simon, anticipated technocracy. Today the political problem is far more in the terms in which Saint-Simon posed it than in the terms in which Rousseau resolved it. The fact that it is not enough to have a government of scientists and industrialists, as the former [Saint-Simon] foresaw, does not mean that we can go back to the latter [Rousseau] (Capitini-Bobbio 2012: 124-125).*

These, therefore, were the differences (and the similarities) of the two positions. In conclusion, one must ask to what extent the political project posited by Capitini was workable. The Perugian thinker's intuitions were profound and his commitment was total. Bobbio captured the originality of his friend who had a great vision that, however, was extremely difficult to convert into a functioning political institutional model (Bobbio 2011: 23-55). Maybe it is more appropriate to speak of a method (a pedagogic political method) to put into practice new forms of citizenship with the aim of arriving at a different way of administering power. As a matter of fact, Capitini attempted a discussion, composed of numerous thematic *nuclei*, on the need for a new power structure, on «the passage of power from the hands of the few who today hold it to the hands of the many who today do not» (Capitini 1969: 154). The goal was an open society, whose political dimension would be grounded in socialism and be built up from the base, strengthening and broadening political participation. This took the form of organizations of direct democracy which were to claim larger and larger pieces of decision-making power, through the free and nonviolent exchange of opinions. This omnicratic reform aimed at creating a new man through a political and social pedagogy, criticizing old ideologies, dissolving old myths and provoking a new awareness for human possibilities.

Looking beyond Fascist monism and contrary to the existing societies which were all more or less closed, Capitini had in mind a dynamic political or-

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tracted by Rousseau's ethical-philosophical idea of political order as 'good life' and 'common good', corresponding to the nature of man. Moreover, it is a concept which gives value to direct participation by the individual in political life and makes it a condition for moral excellence and rationality.

der, in continual flux, perennially ready to be challenged, a system that would not repeat itself, its own past, its own traditions, its own habits. It was a democratic method allowing politics a free rein, with purity of intention, with dialogues, with maximum participation, with mutual respect for different points of view. The peculiar character of this 'open' method, aiming to go beyond the passive and marginal role of citizens in the governance of power, was its pluralism – identified as anti-institutional, anti-party, but also (and above all) as «center», open to the contribution and the involvement of all, and capable of creating a unifying dialogue to reconcile differences and convert them into fertile ground for debate. The Fascist dictatorship had fallen; yet, conscious of the risk of underestimating the danger of new authoritarian forms of government, and committed to emerging from a crisis that had affected economics, moral values and social solidarity, Capitini propounded «a work by the people», able to sustain continual examination and continually to challenge its own premises (Bozzi 1982: 121).

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